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# First responders

by BRIAN LOCKHART

Several years ago I was driving up Highway 400 around 10:30 p.m. heading north.

There was a car ahead of me travelling a little too slow for my liking, so I pulled into the left lane and hit the gas. As soon as I got around him, there were flashing red lights in the rearview mirror.

I pulled over one lane to let him pass, but nope, he stuck with me.

I moved over one more lane and the police car stayed right behind me. That feeling of dread came over me when I realized he was pulling me over.

As I pulled onto the shoulder of the road, I was already calculating the fine in my head.

As the police officer walked toward my car, I decided the best course of action was to simply be polite. There was no way I was going to try to dispute what had just happened. I was well over the speed limit and he was right behind me.

?You know you were doing 130 back there?? he said when he came to the driver's window.

?I believe you're right,? I replied as I handed him my driver's license. ?I really juiced it when I passed that car.?

He took my license and went back to his police car. Most likely he checked to make sure I wasn't wanted for anything and to make sure my driver's license was valid.

The police officer returned to my window less than two minutes later, handed me my license, and said, ?This is your lucky night. We're looking for drunk divers. Slow down?

I thanked him for his understanding.

I have no doubt that the reason I got a warning that night rather than a $300 fine, was simply because I was polite, courteous, and acknowledged that I was speeding. Maybe this cop just appreciated not getting an earful from another driver who is angry for being pulled over for an offence THEY committed.

Police officers take a lot of grief from the public ? from mouthy motorists who are indignant for being stopped after blowing a red light, to criminals who take a swing at them to avoid being arrested for a crime THEY have committed.

The police are simply upholding the law and doing the necessary job they have been hired to do.

Quite often, first responders don't get the credit they deserve for the work they do in our communities.

You probably pass by your local fire hall all the time and don't give it much thought.

When you call the fire department, they respond ? every time.

The fire department plays a vital role in society, and it's also an extremely dangerous job.

First, there is the inherent risk of being near a fire. There is a risk of burns, smoke inhalation, collapsing walls, and collapsing floors.

There is a risk of explosion and dangerous gas.

When attending a motor vehicle accident, they use powerful tools, that pose a risk for the operator and those standing nearby. There is the risk of being on a street and having another car driven by a drunk driver crashing into you while you are completing a rescue.

Then there is the psychological trauma of dealing with some very bad situations.

Firefighters are always training to mitigate the risks of the job, however, the risks will never completely go away.

Paramedics are first responders who have to deal with worst-case situations all the time.

They are routinely called when there has been a serious accident or someone is in a life-threatening situation. They have to remain calm, assess the situation, then act ? possibly to save someone's life.

It is a tough job where you have to pack your emotions away and do the job you were trained to do. You can't become emotionally involved because a child has been seriously injured or a person is going through the last stages of life and you are trying to help them stay alive.

This is another job where the trauma of dealing with such things over a period of years can put a drain on even the strongest people.

The men and women in our cities and towns who take on these jobs and are the first to be there when you need them, deserve the greatest respect from our society because when you really need them, they'll be there.